

# State of Michigan Employees For Your Benefit

provides a variety of timely information related  
to your health care benefits and needs



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## Blue Distinction Centers® make the grade for quality care

Complicated surgeries — and their results — can vary significantly from one hospital to another. You need the facts so you can make smart decisions about where to go for your specialty medical care. To help Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan members identify facilities that meet strict quality criteria, BCBSM recognizes specific facilities as Blue Distinction Centers. Blue Distinction® is a national designation program that recognizes medical facilities that demonstrate expertise in delivering quality specialty care. Using unbiased selection criteria established with recommendations from expert physicians and medical organizations, the Blue Distinction program examines quality measures, processes and outcomes for clinical care.

The Blue Distinction designation can help you make an objective choice when you are looking for a hospital or treatment center. At the core of Blue Distinction are the Blue Distinction Centers for Specialty Care,® that provide services including bariatric surgery, cardiac care, complex and rare cancers, knee and hip replacement, spine surgery and transplants.

The criteria for each Blue Distinction Center include:

- An established specialty care program, actively providing services and performing a required minimum surgical volume
- Appropriate experience of its specialty team
- An established acute care inpatient facility, including intensive care, emergency services and outpatient care



# A healthy weight means a healthier you

We constantly hear that our society is overweight. To combat our weight problems, researchers, exercise buffs and food gurus proclaim magic pills, pull-up bars and lima bean diets—all in the name of losing weight. But according to the National Institutes of Health, Department of Health and Human Resources, losing weight is a balancing act; calories in should equal calories spent.

## Calorie balance

Calorie balance is important for maintaining a healthy weight. The amount of energy or calories you get from food and drinks (calories in) is balanced with the energy your body uses for things like breathing, digesting and being physically active (calories out).



No weight gain

Weight gain

Weight loss

To maintain a healthy weight, your calories in and calories out don't have to balance every day. It's the balance over time that helps you maintain a healthy weight, but always check with your doctor first to make sure these ideas are good for you.

## Tips for a healthy weight

A healthy weight allows you to have enough energy for your daily activities. It doesn't put you at risk for weight-related problems such as heart disease and diabetes. Here are some sensible tips on attaining your healthy weight:

- **Focus on health first.** Although getting to a certain number on the scale may be your goal, good health should be your motivation. Losing weight can be challenging, but small steps toward eating healthier and becoming more active can boost your energy and improve how you feel.
- **Pay attention to how much you eat.** Even with healthy foods, eating too much can lead to weight gain. Many of us consume more calories than we need, often without realizing how many calories are in the foods we're eating. Know portion sizes. That



way you can make conscious choices about what and how much you're eating.

- **Be more active.** A big part of weight control is exercise. When you change your eating habits and exercise regularly, you increase your chances of losing weight. There are ways to be active in addition to traditional exercise. Even moving faster as you do chores like cleaning or vacuuming can boost your activity level and help you become more fit.
- **Don't gain any more weight.** A commitment not to increase your current weight is a step in the right direction.
- **Watch your dietary habits.** Is your diet made up of high-fat, high-calorie foods and chock-full of salty snacks and sugary sweets? Good food choices are your first line of defense in maintaining a healthy weight. While everyone may occasionally enjoy a treat, it's best to limit these foods. Again, it's a matter of balance; eating healthy foods most of the time, an occasional treat shouldn't derail your weight-loss goals.
- **Balance your calories** If you're trying to lose weight, keep in mind that you must eat about 3,500 calories less than what you're currently eating to lose a pound of body fat. To lose about one to two pounds per week, you'll need to reduce your daily intake by 500 to 1,000 calories per day. On the other hand, if you're underweight and need to gain weight, you'll need to increase your caloric intake by 500 to 1,000 calories per day to gain one to two pounds per week.

People who don't eat nutritious, balanced diets may not be healthy regardless of how much they weigh, so it's critical to be focused on more than weight. Healthy bodies come in many shapes and sizes. Eating better and becoming more active are two keys to improving your overall health.

Managing your weight is a daily effort. You may not feel like exercising on one day or you may want to eat ice cream on another day. This is to be expected, and it's not the end of the world as long as those days are the exception rather than the rule. Losing weight is hard work, but over time with focus on the basic strategies, you can do it.

## What's your body mass index?

Some people choose to get the ball rolling by assessing where they are and identifying weight goals. Getting on the scale is one way of measuring weight, while calculating body mass index is another. Body mass index (BMI) is an indicator that assigns a numeric value representing overall body fat based on height and weight. By referring to a BMI table or calculator, you can determine if your BMI falls within a healthy weight range or if you need to lose weight to get into a healthier range. "Overweight" is defined as having a BMI of 25 to 29. A BMI of 30 and over is considered obese.

Research shows that many health risks increase as a person's BMI reaches overweight or obese levels. The following conditions are among those associated with being overweight or obese: coronary heart disease; Type 2 diabetes, cancers (endometrial, breast and colon), dyslipidemia (for example, high total cholesterol or high levels of triglycerides), stroke, liver and gallbladder disease, osteoarthritis, sleep apnea and respiratory problems.

Your BMI is just one indicator of your health, it doesn't tell the full story. Be sure to have your doctor perform appropriate health assessments to evaluate your individual health status and risks.

Sources: National Institutes of Health Dept of Health and Human Resources [nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/obesity/wecan/healthy-weight-basics/](http://nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/obesity/wecan/healthy-weight-basics/)



# Make sunglasses part of your wardrobe

You know you should wear sunscreen when you go out in the sun to protect your skin. But did you know you need to wear sunglasses to protect your eyes? Sunglasses aren't just a chic accessory; they protect your eyes against the sun's damaging ultraviolet (UV) radiation. UV rays can contribute to changes in the eye and a number of serious eye diseases. Cataracts, sunburned corneas and cancer of the eyelid are among those UV-related dangers.

Everyone is at risk for eye damage from the sun year-round. The risk is greatest from about 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. People who fish, farmers, beach-goers, and others who spend time in the sun for extended periods are at highest risk.

Good sunglasses are the key to protecting your eyes from UV damage. Your sunglasses should block 99 to 100 percent of the full UV spectrum. You can't tell by the price of the sunglasses or by looking at them. Just because they cost a small fortune, it doesn't guarantee they'll protect your eyes. An inexpensive pair of sunglasses may offer more UV protection than designer sunglasses. And a pair of sunglasses may have a dark tint, but offer little or no UV protection. In fact, they can *promote* damage to the eye. So

look for sunglasses with labels designating their UV protection.

You can enhance the protection offered by your sunglasses by wearing a wide-brimmed hat, which reduces the amount of UV on your face by about 50 percent.

## Focus on quality shades

So what should you look for when you buy your next pair of shades? Follow these suggestions:

- Make sure the sunglasses block 99 to 100 percent of UV-A and UV-B rays. Check the label. The UV protection comes from a chemical coating applied to the lens surface, not the darkness of the lens. Don't forget that children need proper UV-protected sunglasses, too.
- The lenses should be dark enough to reduce glare, but not dark enough to distort colors and affect the recognition of traffic signals. Polarized sunglasses reduce glare from snow, water, highways, and other reflective surfaces. Consequently, wearers see better and squint less.



- The lenses must match in color and be free of distortion and imperfection. Test the optical quality of the lens by putting on the sunglasses and looking at a vertical edge or line. Move your head back and forth allowing your eyes to sweep across the lens. If there is a wiggle in the line, the lens may have an optical defect and you should choose another pair.
  - Impact-resistant sunglasses resist breakage if you drop or mishandle them. In addition, these lenses have a coating that protects them against scratching.
- So, when you go out, don't forget your sunscreen and your hat. Oh, and grab your shades. That way you can keep your vision and make a fashion statement at the same time.

## Color makes a difference

While tint is mainly a matter of personal preference, here are some color features:

Color of lenses	Feature
Gray and green	Provide the best vision clarity and keeps colors neutral. Depending on the density of color, these lenses can offer protection against sun and glare.
Amber or brown	Works best in hazy weather or at dusk by better defining the terrain.
Yellow	A favorite with skiers and skeet shooters, this color provides excellent depth perception and low light contrast. They also work well in foggy conditions.
Amber, yellow, orange and red	Increase depth perception and color contrast. These colors are beneficial for low vision problems such as cataracts, macular degeneration and glaucoma.

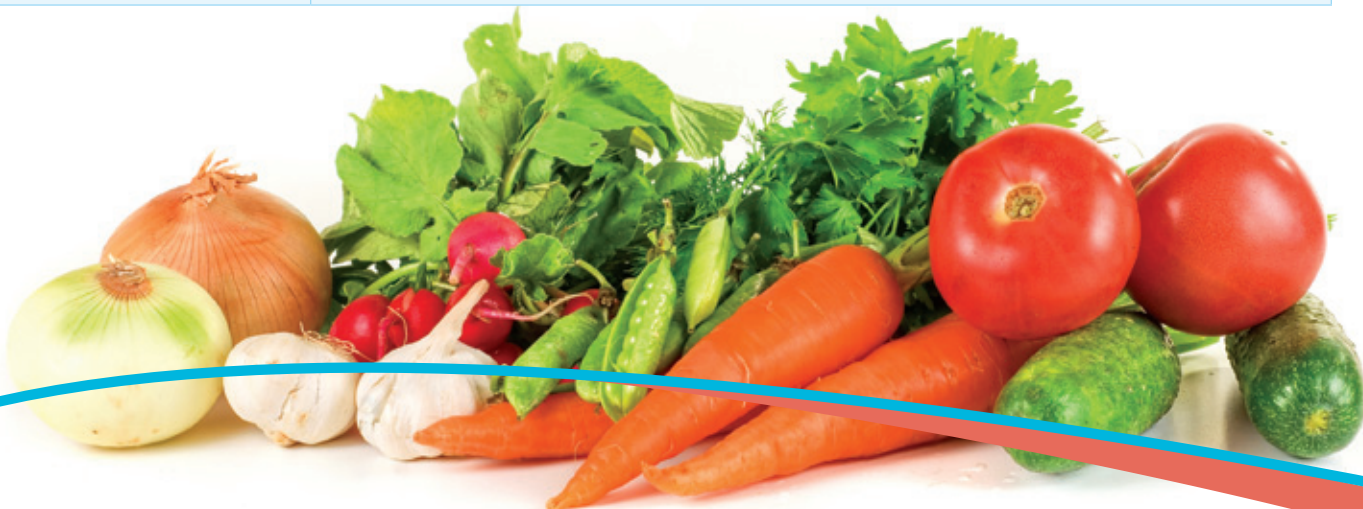
Source: Shopping Guide for Sunglasses. American Optometric Association (AOA).



# Eat healthier for a better life

A healthy lifestyle is made up of small choices. Here are a few ways you can improve your eating habits by making some changes to your daily diet.

If you normally	Try this instead
Drink whole or 2% milk	Drink fat free milk
Drink pop	Drink water, diet pop or 100% juice (not a juice drink)
Eat dessert	Eat fruit (frozen grapes are great)
Have second helpings	Put the food away as soon as you have the first serving
Eat large portions	Eat off a smaller plate, or if you're in a restaurant, ask for a carryout container and put half your meal in it as soon as it's served
Eat white bread or pasta	Go for a variety of whole-grain foods such as oatmeal, corn meal, brown rice and even popcorn (unbuttered and unsalted, of course)
Use butter	Try oils low in saturated fats such as olive, canola or peanut oil. In recipes, try applesauce instead of fats
Eat fast food on the road	Pack fruits and vegetables for car rides
Eat red meat	Prepare lean cuts of pork, skinless chicken or turkey, or fish
Snack on chips and junk food	Keep fruits and veggies handy in the fridge
Skip breakfast	Eat a healthy breakfast every morning; try to include a protein that will sustain you until lunch, and a whole-grain carbohydrate for energy
Fry your food	To reduce the fat in your overall diet, grill, roast or bake your food



## Herbal products may not be safe with medications

Herbs are plants used in small amounts as spices and sometimes in larger amounts as remedies. Herbs are often referred to as “natural” so you may think they’re safe to use. But safety, purity and effectiveness of herbs as remedies have not been established. In fact, a federal law classifies herbs as dietary supplements rather than over-the-counter medicines. In addition, herbal products may interact with over-the-counter and prescription medicines when taken together.

### Here are some interesting facts about herbs:

- Herbal products are often composed of ingredients that have the same medicinal action as prescription drugs, but in unknown dosage amounts, so sometimes herbal products have the same effect as prescription drugs.
- Early prescription drugs were made from herbs, leaves, tree bark and seeds.
- Modern medicines that are derived from herbs include aspirin (from willow bark) and digitalis (from foxglove).

Here’s a dangerous scenario: Your doctor prescribes digitalis for your congestive heart failure. Digitalis is a drug that strengthens the contraction of the heart muscle, slows the heart rate and helps eliminate fluid from body tissues. Your doctor gives you a specific dosage according to your body size and your degree of illness. If you take a supplement of foxglove, you may be doubling the dosage which could lead to a

heart attack or death.

Remember, herbal products can change the way over-the-counter and prescription drugs work in your body. So, be careful. Talk with your doctor or pharmacist about the safety of combining herbs with your medications.

Source: The Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia



### Blue Distinction Centers [continued from pg 1](#)

- Full accreditation by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS)
- A comprehensive quality management program
- Documented patient care and follow-up procedures at admission and discharge, including referral back to primary care physicians

The Blue Distinction designation identifies institutions that lead the way in delivering quality care. The criteria we use to select Blue Distinction Centers are made available to the public. This allows both consumers and health care providers to understand what’s behind this quality designation.

Our goals are to:

- Encourage health care providers to improve the overall quality and delivery of health care, resulting in better overall outcomes for patients
- Support consumers as they identify medical facilities that best meet their needs

### Tools to help you make your decision

Blue Distinction gives you the tools and resources you need to seek better overall results for complex surgeries, treatments and procedures. To locate Blue Distinction Centers near you, use the Blue Distinction Center Finder on [bcbsm.com](http://bcbsm.com), or call the toll-free Customer Service number on the back of your BCBSM ID card. When it comes to getting specialty care, we’re here to help you find safe, quality care at facilities that meet your needs.

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State of Michigan Employees

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Our customer service representatives are available from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday excluding holidays.

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